

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /074 W

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P R 192250Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2306

INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 8219

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, EC

SUBJECT: NEW PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS CHALLENGE GOE

REF: QUITO 7590

1. SUMMARY: A CIVIC STRIKE IN ESMERALDAS PROVINCE THAT BEGAN NOV. 18, LAND INVASIONS, AND REACTION TO THE ARREST OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RECTOR, CAMILO MENA, HAVE ADDED TO THE GOE'S POLITICAL WOES. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ITS PLANS WILL NOT BE CHANGED BY STRIKE PRESSURES, THE LATEST PROBLEMS COMPLICATE THE LOCAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND ITS CURRENT BACKGROUND OF VAGUE RUMORS OF PLOTTING. END SUMMARY.

2. A CIVIC STRIKE WHICH CLOSED DOWN COMMERCE, SCHOOLS AND SOME SOCIAL SERVICES BEGAN IN ESMERALDAS NOV. 18 IN AN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE GOE INTO TAKING ACTION ON CERTAIN PROVINCIAL PROJECTS. THE ESMERALDAS STRIKE COMMITTEE, ATTEMPTING TO EMULATE THE SUCCESSES OF A SIMILAR RECENT STRIKE IN CHIMBORAZO PROVINCE (REFTEL) HAS DEMANDED SUCH GOE ACTIONS AS INDEMNIFICATION OF EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS, REPAIR OF THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT AND THE CONSTRUCTION
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OF A NUMBER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS. CAPT. HUGO GARCES,

SECRETARY GENERAL OF ADMINISTRATION, PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOE ALREADY HAD PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESMERALDAS PROVINCE AND THEY WILL NOT BE CHANGED BECAUSE OF STRIKE PRESSURES.

3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPARENTLY REACTED STRONGLY TO THE ESMERALDAS STRIKE. NEWSPAPER AND RADIO ACCOUNTS HAVE REPORTED PERSONS WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE AND THE CLOSURE OF RADIO STATIONS BY THE AUTHORITIES.

4. IN AN UNRELATED DEVELOPMENT, CAMILO MENA AND JORGE GUZMAN, RECTOR AND SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY, DEAN OF QUITO'S CENTRAL UNIVERSITY, WERE ARRESTED ECEE.#IN A DECLARATION

PUBLISHED NOV. 19, THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY COUNCIL INSISTED ON THEIR RELEASE AND SAID THAT THE MEN WERE IN CHIMBORAZO ON PURELY ACADEMIC BUSINESS. THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS THAT SEVERAL CAMPESINOS WERE INJURED IN CLASHES WITH THE AUTHORITIES DURING THE INVASIONS. THE GOE HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT MENA WILL BE TRIED AS ANY OTHER CITIZEN CHARGED WITH ILLEGAL ACTIVITY. THE UNIVERSITY INSISTS THAT HE WAS ON ACADEMIC BUSINESS AND NOT INVOLVED IN THE LAND INVASIONS.

5. COMMENT: THE ESMERALDAS STRIKE, THE CHIMBORAZO LAND INVASIONS, AND THE ENSUING ARRESTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS TAKE PLACE AGAINST A POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF RECENT CHANGES IN THE NATION'S ECONOMIC TEAM AND RENEWED RUMORS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN THE MILITARY. THE GOE SEEMS AWARE AND ALERT TO CHALLENGES TO ITS AUTHORITY FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT ITS RANKS. AND DESPITE THE RUMORS, ANY ACTUAL PLOTTING SEEMS TO BE IN A HIGHLY INCHOATE STATE AND EMBASSY ESTIMATES THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME A MUCH MORE CONCRETE FORM BEFORE IT REPRESENTED A CLEAR DANGER TO THE STABILITY OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.
BLOOMFILED

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